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ABSTRACT

An educational workshop series was created to prepare clinical coordinators in Physician's Assistant (PA) programs to assist clinical instructors and preceptors in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning experiences for PA students that focus on clinical skills. Six goals were established: (1) develop a strategy for outlining the student goals during clinical rotations and preceptorships (including involving the student more in formulating clear, appropriate, and relevant objectives); (2) establish a methodology to meet these goals; (3) determine the criteria for measuring goal attainment; (4) plan for the recruitment of clinical instructors; (5) foster team functioning in clinical sites; and (6) establish criteria for evaluating clinical sites and clinical instructors. The workshop ultimately aided participants in developing educational programs for PAs in their own areas and in increasing student-teacher communication. It is recommended that faculty who conduct faculty development efforts should be experts in medical education, that a variety of audiences be considered for faculty development efforts, and that PA faculty should have more experience in working with preceptors. (PJM)

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MODEL DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND
EVALUATION OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS
IN TRAINING OF PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT

Covers Period of Performance
During
October 1, 1977 - June 30, 1979
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
MAIN TEXT	1

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INTRODUCTION TO MAIN TEXT

The vast majority of Physician Assistant (PA) program faculty have had no formal help in designing and evaluating instructional experiences, let alone helping others (preceptors) design and evaluate such experiences. The Federal government, in an attempt to improve the quality of teaching in the clinical component of PA programs, issued an RFP calling for a series of educational workshops for clinical coordinators. The Department of Health Care Sciences at George Washington University responded to this RFP and was awarded the contract.

MAIN TEXT

DEFINITION OF PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the contract was to develop, conduct and evaluate an educational workshop series to prepare clinical coordinators in Physician's Assistant programs to assist clinical instructors and preceptors in designing, implementing and evaluating learning experiences for PA students that focus on clinical skills.

Six regional workshops were held, as specified by the contract, with two workshops in each of three geographical areas--the first three days long, the second, two. Two participants from each program attended both workshops for their region, except where last minute problems arose.

Specific workshop goals, along with a brief description of the way they were addressed during the project, were as follows:

- 1) Participants are to develop a strategy for outlining the goals they have for their students during clinical rotations and preceptorships.

Most of the participants had already developed goals and objectives for their various rotations and preceptorships. However, a good number of them decided to rework the goals and objectives for one or more rotations. As a result of exercises and discussions at the workshops, they decided: to involve preceptors and students more in formulating objectives; to focus on clarity, appropriateness and relevance; and to develop a mechanism so that goals and objectives could be continually reworked by new students and preceptors.

2) Participants are to establish a methodology to meet these goals.

Since every student is unique, it is impossible to design a uniform strategy which is meaningful and appropriate to all students. At the workshops, we introduced participants to a variety of learning strategies, including the use of simulated patients, videotextology, individualized program learning, written simulations and small group learning. We encouraged them to consider ways these methods and resources could be utilized in facilitating their students' learning.

3) Determine the criteria which can be used to measure the attainment of their goals.

At the workshops, we discussed how the process of formulating goals includes deciding what criteria will be used to evaluate whether goals have been realized.

4) Plan for the recruitment of clinical instructors.

Time was provided at the workshops for persons from programs successful in recruiting and keeping preceptors to share their strategies. Emphasis was placed on the need for good communication between staff and preceptors and the need to involve preceptors in planning and evaluation.

5) Foster team functioning in clinical sites.

Emphasis throughout the workshops was placed on the importance of good communication among students, preceptors and staff. Participants were involved in numerous exercises focusing on interpersonal skills.

6) Establish criteria for evaluating clinical sites and clinical instructors.

These issues were addressed in two different group exercises, one focusing on the characteristics of effective clinical instructors, the other on the characteristics of good teaching sites.

EXPLANATION OF QUESTIONS OR ISSUES CONSIDERED UNDER THE PROJECT

Goals and purposes of instructional experiences must be related to the real needs of students, and they should be formulated jointly by teachers and students. Throughout our project, we wanted to model the principles we tried to teach.

To avoid presuming to know exactly what the participants needed, we preceded the project with a "needs assessment survey" (funded entirely by George Washington University). We wanted answers to such questions as:

How are clinical components of PA programs currently designed?

What are the roles and responsibilities of those persons called "clinical coordinators?"

What do program directors see as barriers to effective instruction in their programs?

What do program directors and participants see as their programs' major areas of need?

Who are the people responsible for instruction in the clinical component of the programs?

In what areas would they like help at the workshops?

In response to the surveys, we formulated a set of goals for each workshop in addition to the goals specified in the contract. Because of the differing characteristics of the participants from each region of the country, the goals varied from workshop to workshop.

DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES EMPLOYED

During the first month of the project, the project director hired a research assistant, established the Advisory and Working Committees and worked with one of the consultants on the design of the project.

The Advisory Committee, as specified, determined the specific objectives for the workshops, defined the criteria for selection of participants, defined program eligibility and the length of the workshops, and approved evaluation criteria. One advisor was chosen for each workshop to serve as a non-participant observer/evaluator.

A meeting of clinical coordinators from the Washington/Baltimore area was held to learn more about the general needs of PA programs and their clinical coordinators. Two needs assessment surveys were developed (funded by GWU) as mentioned above. Sites were established for the workshops, and the workshop faculty selected. Dates for each workshop were finalized.

Announcements of the project were made at the annual meeting of the Association of Physician's Assistant Programs, as well as in that association's publications. Program directors were sent announcements and asked to nominate two people from their programs to attend. These people in turn were sent more detailed workshop descriptions, as well as a needs assessment survey.

Workbooks were designed to include an outline of the purpose of

the workshops, a core description of the workshop processes and a description of the role of the participants and faculty.

Two workshops were held in each of three regions, the East, South/Central and West. A project was planned by each team of participants during the first workshop, carried out between workshops, and shared and evaluated during the second workshop in each series. "NEWSNOTES " concerning participant projects and other important information were sent to each participant before and after the second workshop.

As a follow-up to the project, we developed a final national issue of "NEWSNOTES" including information about projects and participants in all three regions.

Evaluation of the workshops was undertaken by the participants at each workshop, the faculty, and an Advisory Committee Evaluator.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has:

- 1) made information about backgrounds, interests and needs of clinical coordinators available;
- 2) helped participants become committed to developing and enhancing the skills they need to develop high quality clinical programs;
- 3) helped participants implement basic principles of effective instruction in their programs;
- 4) helped participants develop and carry out "workshop projects" which they implemented in their programs;

- 5) modeled a way of teaching which participants will, hopefully, want to emulate in their own programs;
- 6) helped participants value students being "active" in their own learning; and
- 7) helped participants develop a network of communications among themselves.

Some of the recommendations of the final report follow.

Faculty who conduct faculty development efforts should be experts in medical education.

Faculty development efforts to consider in the future include: regional workshops, national workshops, workshop at individual PA programs, consultations to individual PA programs and development of learning materials to be used by faculty on their own.

A variety of audiences should be considered for faculty development efforts, including preceptors themselves, PA program administrators, PA and MD faculty, as well as students.

The vast majority of PA faculty have had little or no preparation for teaching or working with preceptors. Since the quality of educational programs depends on the competence of the faculty, it is crucial that faculty development be viewed as an important ongoing activity.